

the Constitutional provisions for freedom of religion and the role of the National Commission for Minorities and the National Human Rights Commission of India. However, it also contains certain adverse comments and notes, *inter-alia*, that personal and property disputes occasionally acquire a religious colour.

(b) Government does not comment on an exercise that is part of the internal processes of any foreign Government.

Attacks on minorities in Pakistan

† 1273. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the attacks on minorities living in Pakistan;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the efforts made to prevent such attacks?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH):

(a) Attacks against minorities in Pakistan have come to light from time to time. In a recent incident, on 28th October 2001, 16 Christians were killed in a Church at Bahawalpur by suspected religious extremists.

(b) and (c) With the growing influence of religious extremism and obscurantism in Pakistan, including due to the active support and sponsorship given to it by the Pakistan State, minority communities living in Pakistan have been complaining of increasing insecurity and systematic discrimination.

The element of discrimination against minority communities in Pakistan is built into the very structure of the Pakistan State. This is witnessed in the practice of separate electorates for minority communities, as also in the use of Pakistan's "anti-blasphemy laws" to persecute and intimidate religious minorities in Pakistan.

Government are of the view that a constitutional and democratic framework is essential for ensuring that the rights of minority communities are protected. It is also clear that State that actively promote religious extremism and obscurantism for their own distorted purposes are incapable of ensuring the protection of minority rights.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.